



## On-The-Record Briefing Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I had an opportunity to speak to you yesterday and you had an opportunity to ask questions, but just let me recap that the purpose of this trip is really several-fold.

First of all, I'm starting in Tokyo and then in Seoul and then with a trilateral with the Japanese and the South Koreans because when something like this happens in the international system, when there is a change in the threat environment, which I think you can certainly consider the North Korean test to be, it's first and foremost important to go and talk with your allies, to reaffirm alliance commitments. The President has reaffirmed the full range of our commitments, including our deterrent commitments to Japan and South Korea.

We have, fortunately, spent a good deal of time over the last several years since the President has been in office in modernizing these alliances, in making certain that they are ready for 21st century threats. You may know that Don Rumsfeld has done a lot of work with this. I've done a lot of work with our counterparts. We have a new set of defense understandings with Japan, for instance. And so the alliances are in very good shape, but it's first and foremost important to reaffirm our alliance commitments and to talk about how the alliance will carry out those commitments.

Secondly, it is important to go out and to consolidate the gains of Resolution 1718, to talk with all of the parties in the region about how we will carry out our obligations under 1718. There are obligations for sanctions on North Korea. There are also obligations to inspect certain cargoes. It is extremely important to recognize that this is a set of obligations under 1718 that I think all states are determined to carry out.

I want to be very clear that we have no desire to see this crisis escalate. In fact, it is our goal to see a de-escalation of this despite North Korea's actions. But North Korea now needs to understand that the international community has spoken, the international community has said that it is unacceptable for North Korea to have a nuclear program, that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains the goal of the international community; and so enforcing 1718 so that the North understands that it has no other option but to return to negotiations is extremely important.

Third, there are some defensive measures that we want to discuss with states in the region. For instance, you know that we have a Proliferation Security Initiative. We also have discussions going on with, for instance, the Japanese about missile defense, about what we might do in terms of intelligence sharing and cooperation. Because obviously while we are working to reverse what North Korea has done, we also have to take steps to guard against the potential threats, the potential outcomes, of the North Korean behavior, and so stepping up defensive measures is going to be very important.

Fourth, I think we want to have some preliminary discussions about the nonproliferation regime itself. It is under strain. It's not broken. The President has had some very important ideas about how to provide civil nuclear energy to states without proliferation risk of the kind that we have offered to the Iranians, and I think we will want to talk some about the nonproliferation regime because everybody is very concerned that with the North Korean events and with Iran's refusal to take the deal that has been put before it that there are weaknesses in the international -- the nonproliferation regime that need to be shored up.

Finally, I want to assure everybody that we want to leave a path open to a negotiated solution, a reversal of the North Korean program, because our goal in all of this, whether it's the resolution or the measures that we might take, is to reverse the North Korean program and to have the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

So those are really the goals of this trip. This first stop in Japan will focus heavily on alliance relations and on implementation of 1718, as will the next stop in Seoul. And we can talk more about Beijing as we get closer.

**QUESTION:** There's some discomfort among your Asian allies that the U.S. is going to be pushing hard for regime change in North Korea. What are your views on regime change in North Korea and has the nuclear test killed off the six-party process?

**SECRETARY RICE:** First of all, the United States has made very clear its goal. Its goal is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Now, it is very much the case that we -- the long-suffering people of North Korea should not be forgotten by the international system. We have, for instance, within the context of six-party talks brought up issues of human rights, issues of the treatment of the North Korean people, and we are trying to find a way to continue humanitarian assistance despite the lack of transparency in the North Korean regime that makes it unclear where that food is going.

But the goal here is to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. The goal here is to try to find ways that this -- it would be a wonderful thing if there could be an opening up of North Korea because the North Korean people live under conditions that are just truly appalling. And so we're not going to forget them. We're not going to forget our commitment to people who have been left under the rule of regimes like this. Our key goal here is to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. And as to -- as I said, the goal here is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but the President has been very clear that North Korea, the North Korean people, deserve better than they have.

**QUESTION:** When Vice President Cheney was in Asia in 2004, he spoke in China and said that if North Korea built up a nuclear arsenal there was a real danger that it would unleash an arms race in Asia, particularly among the Japanese and the South Koreans. How much is that a concern here and how are you planning to really address that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, obviously an event of this kind does carry with it the potential for instability in the relationships that now exist in the region, and so that's why it's extremely important to go out and to affirm, and affirm strongly, U.S. defense commitments to Japan and to South Korea. I think the Japanese, for instance, have made very clear through Prime Minister Abe that they intend to pursue their security and their concerns about a nuclear Korean Peninsula through the U.S.-Japan defense alliance in which the United States maintains a deterrent commitment to Japan. It's equally important that we reaffirm that commitment to South Korea because I think through doing that we can mitigate some of the potential for a truly destabilizing set of events to take place in the region in response to the North Korean test.

It's also the case that reversibility of this program is extremely important to what the future of the region is going to look like, and I think we also want to have outside of our defense commitments with Japan and South Korea to have broader talks with China, with Russia and with others -- Australia, New Zealand, others -- about how we maintain in Northeast Asia and in the Asia-Pacific a security environment that is not given to an arms race.

So I think it's very important. The Vice President was right. Something like this has potential. But I think we have a lot of means to prevent that from happening.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. The North actually issued its first response today and said both that the sanctions amount to an act of war and that essentially they have no reason to comply now that they are a nuclear weapons power. What gives you any confidence that with that ability in its pocket the North is going to be any more willing

to comply, listen, come to talks, do anything that you ask of it?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would say first of all that their response is unsurprising and very much the way North Korea tends to respond to these things. But there's an obligation under 1718. We'll see if they choose to fulfill it. The goal of 1718 is to find a way to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. I want to note too, I saw that the North Koreans said somebody about this contributed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. I'd like to know how that is. But in any case, you know, we'll see what they do over time. The response, the initial response, I think was totally to be expected.

**QUESTION:** So would a second North Korean nuclear test bring additional action by the United States and the United Nations, or are you pretty much doing everything you can right now in terms of sanctions and so forth?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm not going to speculate, but obviously we're concerned about a further action by the North Koreans. But further action by the North Koreans is only going to deepen their isolation, which is pretty deep right now. I want to remind everyone that a Chapter 7 resolution with real sanctions in it and a commitment to inspect North Korean cargo for suspect materials that is joined in not just by the United States and Japan but by China and Russia is pretty deep isolation to begin with.

**QUESTION:** There have been some reports of more activity around the test site that they used before. Can you tell us anything more about those indications, what U.S. satellites are picking up? Do you think the North Koreans are going to do this again?

**SECRETARY RICE:** There are concerns, Barbara. I can't go into the nature of those concerns. Let me just say that I think there are a number of states that are telling the North Koreans that further escalation would not be in their interest or the interest of peace and security, which they've obviously already threatened with their initial nuclear test, and I think they're getting that message from a lot of quarters.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, if the North Koreans don't stand down from their nuclear or missile programs, given the threat to Japan, are there any circumstances under which the U.S. would approve of or at least not strenuously object to a nuclear weapons program in Japan?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I don't see how it helps the situation and I think the Japanese have made very clear that that's not the course that they're on. Prime Minister Abe has spoken authoritatively about it. As I said to Glenn, we have very powerful tools to deal with the North Korean threat. The first is to do everything that we can to reverse their program, and by the way a program that has been -- that they have been pursuing for decades.

And perhaps with the right combination of countries that can bring the right combination of incentives and disincentives, you will finally get a North Korean reversal -- irreversible, verifiable dismantlement of this program. We have not had that. We didn't have it in the '90s. We didn't have it in the '80s. This program has been moving along. So with the right combination of countries, there's a fair chance, I think, to reverse this.

That said, the way to deal with the security threat that it poses is to draw on the very strong alliances that we have with South Korea and with Japan on which they can fully rely for their security from this specific threat. And that's one reason that it's so important at a time like this to reassure. And I'm not the first to give those reassurances. The day of the test, the President talked to both the Japanese and the South Koreans to affirm our commitments.

The final point is that we can also deal with the potential adverse effects in the region by taking defensive measures with other states in the region to make sure that the North cannot transfer these materials and to help the North -- to let the North know that they would bear consequences if they did.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned the '80s and the '90s and how we weren't in a position to reverse it the way we are now. Do you think we're at a better vantage point than we were back then?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think you have a coalition of states ready to deal with the North Korean problem that simply hasn't been there in the past. It's quite remarkable for China to go to a Chapter 7 resolution on a state with which it has close relations both -- well, politically, economically and even ideologically. It is an extraordinary thing for China to be now where it is. That is a new factor in dealing with the North Korean problem. It has taken some time to build that kind of Chinese commitment to the denuclearization. But if we're going to have an opportunity, a chance to denuclearize North Korea-- the Korean Peninsula -- and if we're going to have a chance to make it stick, to make any agreement stick, it cannot be an agreement between the United States and North Korea. It has got to be an agreement between the United States, China, South Korea, Russia, Japan and North Korea. And the framework for that is in place.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. As you said, one of your goals is to come with an architecture for enforcing the resolution, you've also stressed the importance of America's military alliances. So is one of your missions here to talk to Japan and South Korea about setting up a more formal military set of air and sea interdiction and inspection to enforce the resolution?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think that the question of how we will carry out the obligation to inspect has a number of aspects. It depends in part on what authorities countries can use and I think we have to have a discussion of what authorities countries believe that they currently have. The Japanese have already taken some steps in terms of closing ports, for instance, to North Korean traffic. And I don't want to get out ahead of -- and speculate about what might be necessary. I think we have a lot of tools at our disposal that we've already been using through the PSI.

What we're not looking for is -- to inspecting every ship. This isn't the, you know, some random -- inspection may be necessary but you really are in many ways information driven. And information sharing is going to be a very important of this. But again, we'll have somebody come back and talk to you in more detail about what we are -- some of the ideas that we have going forward.

**QUESTION:** Excuse me, I was interested in your assessment of this certain line of reporting that the nuclear test was plutonium and the conclusion, I guess drawn by some intelligence authorities that that meant that the fuel was produced either before 1994 -- likely during the first Bush Administration -- or after 2003 during the current Bush Administration. Curious -- is that assessment correct do you think and also what sort of significance do you attach to this?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Look, there is going to be quite a long process here of understanding what it is that happened, what the basis of it was and what it means for what we know about where their program may be. I really don't want to speculate on any of the multiple reports that are coming out. In part, a lot of this has to do with intelligence information but it's also the case that there's a report every couple of minutes right now. I think we need to give the intelligence community an opportunity to step back and to do a thorough analysis. Because as you know, when one talks about a nuclear event, there are many different variables in understanding what happened and why it happened. And so I think we'll just wait for a full assessment.

**QUESTION:** When it comes down to the nuts and bolts and dealing with China specifically, how are you going to persuade the Chinese to have long-term pressure on the North Koreans because it has its own national interest to consider? And many say that China's more worried about an imploding North Korea than a nuclear North Korea.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we certainly are concerned also that the region be one that is stable and that is peaceful so that the remarkable economic development, for instance, that has been going on in this region for now close to 20 years can continue. So we share that interest with China. But I think that it's not going to be a stable environment unless we can do something about the North Korean nuclear program and the threat that that brings about. And so I think we and the China actually have quite coincident interest here.

I would not say they are identical. China has its own interest. We have own interest, but they are certainly coincident. They're certainly -- it's certainly consistent with one another. And I think you now see that the potential for a nuclear Korean Peninsula now has a very high priority, a nuclear Korean Peninsula has a very high priority in the

Chinese list of concerns about this region, which is why I think you got the Chapter 7 resolution.

Now, I think everybody will want to diffuse the crisis -- not to escalate the crisis -- to find a way to use negotiation and diplomacy to reverse the North Korean program. That's the purpose of 1718. It's not pressure for the sake of pressure; it's pressure to bring about a change in what North Korea's doing. But I don't think that the Chinese or anyone else is going to have a short-term perspective on what it would mean to have a nuclear Korean Peninsula, so I'm confident that this can be maintained over time. But people are going to want to see what we can do to have a path back to negotiation, now once it's been evident to the North Koreans that they really don't have other choices.

Okay. (Inaudible) had a question.

**QUESTION:** Just on the issue of negotiations, why are you offering to return to the six-party talks with North Korea without precondition and including one-on-one contacts while at the same time refusing that to Iran over its much less developed nuclear program?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Not every situation in international politics is the same. If you try to get the same result by using the same method, you're not even going to get the same result with every case. And so of course the situations are different. The precondition of a suspension of enrichment and reprocessing was set all the way back at the -- when the Paris agreement, the Paris talks collapsed. And it's a condition of the IAEA Board of Governors and it has to do with not allowing the Iranian program to progress under cover of negotiation. That's really the purpose of having a freeze or a suspension of enrichment and reprocessing because as long as you are running cascades, as long as you're introducing (inaudible) and you're learning how to use technologies that can then lead to a nuclear weapon, so that's the logic that leads people to say there has to be a suspension, because you don't want the Iranians to be perfecting these technologies while you're talking.

In the North Korean case, we actually have an agreement on the table, a negotiated agreement, a framework agreement that is ready to be filled out, ready to be implemented. And so returning to the talks unconditionally makes a great deal of sense. Now in terms of talking, so called one on one, we've done that before within the context of the six-party talks.

You know, one of the great myths out there is we've refused to talk to the North Koreans. In September, a couple weeks I think it was before the -- maybe a few days -- a few days before the six-party talks actually convened, Chris Hill met with his North Korean counterpart in Beijing for a dinner with the North Koreans. So there's this myth out there that we haven't been willing to talk to the North Koreans. What we've been unwilling to do is to negotiate bilaterally with the North Koreans another agreement that they are going to be free to disregard because it will be only with the United States and not with states that frankly have more leverage than the United States like China and South Korea.

Last one.

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to see if you could elaborate a little bit on this issue of under what authority countries would be able to do this interdiction and give a little bit of a sense of where the South Koreans stand on that, and also whether it's your view, this is related, as to whether the resolution really creates a new legal foundation for PSI essentially.

**SECRETARY RICE:** The obligation in the resolution is to prevent the transfer of these materials or the trafficking in dangerous materials, weapons or anything of the kind. That's the obligation. The tools that states can use to fulfill that obligation include inspection at land borders, something that is very important when you're dealing with very long land borders as you are in the region. You obviously under certain circumstances, if there's suspicious cargo, it might be necessary to find a way to inspect that cargo. The PSI has operated on the basis of national authorities and international law of the sea. That's how the PSI has operated.

If you were building a kind of framework for this kind of work, which I think we're going to need to do, given the proliferation risks that are out there, this would be I think another extremely important pillar in giving states both an obligation and tools to deal with that obligation. I would not make the argument that it somehow radically changes the international legal foundation. But what it does do is it changes the obligation of states to make certain that they are using whatever authorities they can to make sure that this trafficking does not take place. It's a mandatory obligation. That is different than a voluntary obligation under PSI where states did this cooperatively because they had concerns. There is now under Chapter 7, the words of threat to international peace and security of North Korean activities. And by the way, it makes the North Korean program itself illegal in that same resolution.

**QUESTION:** Now, I just wanted to clarify something. When you answered Sue's question, you didn't repeat the usual verbiage of no plans to attack or invade. And I just -- just to take it a little further, why is it that we -- the United States doesn't say we have no hostile intent toward them or --peacefully co-exist and it's in the September 19th statement?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Go and read the Joint Statement, okay, the September 19th statement. That's as good a statement of not just U.S. policy, but policy of the states in the region concerning the relationship to the regime and how that might unfold. But just for the record, I will repeat that the United States does not intend to, desire to, wish to, attack or invade North Korea. It's a statement that the President made all the way back in -- when he was in South Korea, I think in 2002. And so this is U.S. policy. But as to the questions about what we would be willing to do with the regime, I think the joint statement is really the best statement of that.

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